

A HOMILY FOR HUMBLE FOLKS NO. 2140

A SERMON
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*"Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man."
Proverbs 30:2*

SOMETIMES it is necessary for a speaker to refer to himself, and he may feel it needful to do so in a way peculiar to the occasion. When Elihu addressed himself to Job and the three wise men, he commended himself to them saying, "I am full of matter, the spirit within me constrains me," but when Agur instructed his two disciples, Ithiel and Ucal, he spoke in the lowliest terms of himself, and declared that he was "more brutish than any man."

Wisdom is justified of her children. Neither of these men was to blame for his opening words to his hearers. Elihu was a young man talking to elderly men of great note for learning, he saw that they had blundered terribly, he felt convinced that he had the right view of the matter under discussion, but he thought it discreet to introduce himself by modestly stating the reasons why he thought he should be patiently heard.

Agur was probably a man of years and honor, and possibly his two young friends looked up to him more than was fit, and therefore his principal endeavor was to wean them from undue confidence in himself. He passed the gravest censure upon himself, that his hearers might not suffer their faith to stand in the wisdom of men. I can suppose that both Elihu and Agur were equally humble—the one so modest that he felt that he needed to commend himself to gain a hearing, and the other so lowly that he feared the hearing he should win would place his personal influence in too high a place.

But did Agur really mean all he said? I cannot doubt it. Forcible expressions are not always to be understood in their strictest sense, yet I have no doubt Agur meant to describe himself as he felt himself to be, apart from the grace of God. Or better, and more likely, he felt thus brutish and foolish after he had been enlightened by the Spirit of God.

One mark of a man's true wisdom is his knowledge of his ignorance. Have you never noticed how the clean heart always mourns its uncleanness, and the wise man always laments his folly? It needs holiness to detect our own unholiness, and it needs wisdom to discover our own folly. When a man talks of his own cleanness, his very lips are foul with pride, and when a man boasts of his wisdom, he proclaims his folly with trumpet sound. Because God had taught Agur much, he felt that he knew but little.

Especially I think the truth of our text relates to one particular line of things. This man was a naturalist. We have nothing of his save this chapter, but his allusions to natural history all through it are exceedingly abundant. He was an instructed scientist, but he felt that he could not by searching find out God, nor fashion an idea of Him from his own thoughts. When he heard of the great discoveries of those who judged themselves to be superior persons, he disowned such wisdom as theirs.

Other men with their great understanding might be fishing up pearls of truth from the sea, as for himself, he knew nothing but that which he found in God's Word. He had none of that boasted understanding which climbed the heavens, bound the winds, and swathed the sea, and so discovered the sacred name, he was content with revelation, and felt that "every word of God is pure."

Not in any earthly school learned he the knowledge of the Holy, all that he knew he had been taught by God's Book. He had in thought climbed to heaven and come down again, he had listened to the

speech of winds, and waves, and mountains, but he protested that in all this he had not discovered God's name nor His Son's name by his own understanding. All his light had come through the Lord's own Word, and he shrewdly gave this caution to those who thought themselves supremely wise, above what is written, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar."

Philosophy had failed him and revelation was his sole confidence. As for himself, he did not claim that degree of perception and profundity which enabled him to think out God, but he went to God Himself and learned from Him at first hand, through His revealed wisdom. This I take to be his meaning, but I shall not use the text in that way this morning.

Here was a man, who, whatever he really was, held himself in his own opinion and judgment to be an inferior person, and yet, nevertheless, was *a firm believer* in his God. He was not only a firm believer, but he was *an earnest student* of the sacred oracles. All the more because of his ignorance, he pressed on to learn more and more of God. Nor was this all, he was *a willing worker*, for he spoke prophetically in the name of the Lord. Nor do we even end here, for from this short writing, it is clear that he was *a joyful truster in God*. Brutish as he judged himself to be, he rose into supreme content at every thought of God. Those four points I am going to handle at this time, as the Lord may help me by His Holy Spirit.

I. The first is this—A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US BACK FROM FAITH IN GOD.

I will suppose that someone here is saying, "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man," our text brings before us a wise man, who said this of himself, and yet had firm faith in God. If we have to say what Agur said, let us also trust as Agur did. If only wise men might put their trust in God, what would become of nine out of ten of us?

I hope there is nobody here so foolish as to say, "I could trust in God if I were a man of mark." Ah, sirs! to be a man of mark is no help in the matter of faith. I hope no one is so silly as to say, "If I were possessed of great riches I could then come to Jesus." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Nor may you say, "If I had great gifts I could trust in the Lord Christ." Talents involve responsibility, but they do not help towards salvation. Gifts may even drag a man down, only grace can lift him up. The gifted man may be so full of pride that he may never submit himself to the free grace Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

I shall deal with more sensible objections than these. There are some who seem as if they could not trust Christ and believe in God, because they cannot go with other men in *their heights*, and there are others, strange to say, who have the same difficulty because they cannot follow others into *their depths*.

I will have a word, first, with those who say, "We cannot hope to be saved, because *we cannot reach the heights of other men*." You have marked the holy conduct of certain godly men, and setting your own imperfections side by side with their excellences, you have not only been humbled, but greatly discouraged. You have concluded that you could be saved if you were like these gracious men, but that, since you fall so far short of their noble character, you must be lost. You have seen them in sickness, and marked their patience and joy, and their acquiescence in the divine will, and you have been greatly humbled, which was well, but you have also fallen into unbelief, which was not well. Since you cannot play the man under fire as these champions do, you fear that you may not hope for eternal life.

Moreover, you have listened to their prayers, you have been edified, you have been aroused, and you have also been driven to tremble. Seeing Jacob in his wrestling at Jabbok, you have cried, "Would God I could wrestle like that man, but as I cannot, woe is me!" You have noticed Daniel go to his chamber and cry unto his God three times a day, and then you have remembered your own forgetfulness and wandering thoughts in the matter of prayer, and you have concluded that you could have no hope of speeding at the throne of grace.

Other aspects of the piety of believers have also discouraged you. To see how they walk with God, how their speech is perfumed with love to Jesus, how their manner of life is above that of the world—all this has made you fear that you could never enter into their heritage. These gracious men seem so far above you, that you cry, "Surely I am more brutish than any man."

You have noticed, also, their usefulness—how many souls they have brought to Christ, how God has helped them to guide the bewildered, and to instruct the ignorant, and then you have felt that it was natural that such men should have confidence towards God, but as for yourself, what is the use of you? You have felt good for nothing in the presence of persons privileged to do so much for God and men.

You have been even more cast down when you have heard them talk of their high joys. The other day you met with one who wore heaven on his face, and you said to yourself, “I wish I knew such joy as beams in this man’s countenance.” You heard your minister describe the deep peace and holy calm which come with full assurance of faith, and every word he spoke about his own joy in the Lord was like a dagger at your heart, for you felt that you could not speak of such a blissful experience. You were never on the top of Tabor, never did you behold the transfigured Lord. You are afraid to trust God because you cannot compare with other men in their heights.

Carefully notice two or three little points which I will mention. First, remember that *you see these good people at their best*. You have not seen their seamy side. Perhaps they have not told you of how, at times, their feet were almost gone, their steps had well-nigh slipped. You see their days, and not their nights. I think it is a very sweet trait in your character that you do so. In this you differ from the wicked world. The ungodly always notice the bad points in the saints, they eat up the sins of God’s people as they eat bread, it is nourishment to them.

As for you, poor troubled one! you observe only the virtues of believers, and you overlook their shortcomings. Surely, God has wrought a change in you. In this there is some ground of hope, the Lord, who has taken away your envy, malice, and all uncharitableness, will remove the rest of your sins, if you bring them before Him in repentant faith.

Recollect also, that *you now see men who have faith in God*, and you see in them the result of that faith. Do not imagine that their graces existed before their faith. If you have not the result of faith before you have faith itself, do not be astonished, they had not these excellences before they believed in Jesus! Some of the brightest of them were once the blackest of sinners. “Such were some of you,” said Paul, “but ye are washed.” Can it be a wise thing to say, “I have not those fruits of the Spirit, and therefore I will not cultivate the tree of faith from which they grow”? Nay, rather say, “The Lord, who made these men what they are, can make me what they are. He that could beautify them with righteousness, can also hang my neck with the jewels of holiness.”

Do you not think it would be very great folly on your part if you should refrain from believing in the Lord Jesus, on the ground that *you had greater need to seek Him than other men*? Because you lack these things which you see in the saints, and know that you can only have them of the Lord by faith, is that a reason why you should not go to God in faith? This is a grand argument for going at once.

Should a man plead his poverty as a reason why he should not ask for alms? Is nakedness a reason for refusing to be dressed? Is hunger a motive for rejecting food? or sickness a motive for shutting out the physician? I argue in the opposite way. Your urgent need is the strongest reason why you should claim of the Lord by faith these promises which He has made to needy souls. If you are more brutish than any man, go to the Lord, that He may instruct you!

The greater your need, *the greater opportunity you have of glorifying God by believing in Him for an all-sufficient supply*. If you lack all these lovely and needful things, which you so much admire in others, it is a sad and grievous want, but if you can believe that the Lord of mercy can and will give you all, you will do great honor to His name. Is it not written, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God”? If you were a little sinner, and had little needs, God could only be a little merciful and give you a little supply, but the more brutish you are, and the less of true understanding you have, the greater opportunity have you of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ by believing in Him for the great things which you evidently need.

If you are the greatest fool that ever lived, you will give to Christ all the more honor when you believe that He can make you wise unto salvation. God grant that the heights to which other men reach

may never keep you back from faith in God, but may the rather urge you on to believe great things of God!

But, further, I said—and perhaps I surprised you—that *the depths of other men* have often kept tremblers from a simple faith in God. I know many who say, “I cannot feel as others feel—my heart is hard and insensible, and when I listen to what believers tell me of their sharp distresses, I fear that I cannot be saved, for into these deep places I have never gone.” These depths are of many kinds, but the mention of one or two may suffice.

Some believers have been brought to the Lord through fearful conviction of sin, conviction most overwhelming, they seem to have found their way to heaven round by the brink of hell. “Ah!” say you, “I was never thus shaken over the pit.” Another, after he has been converted, experiences awful conflicts, from day to day he struggles with inbred corruptions, and therefore he goes sighing and crying to heaven.

There is, among the best of men, an amount of sorrow which I need not here dwell upon. Ploughing, harrowing, scarifying, fall to the lot of the best of soils. Saints go through fire and through water, in their spiritual march to the land of bliss. Perhaps some of you escape these agonies, and know but little of the grinding process. Will you therefore fear to believe, because you think you are more unfeeling than other men? Will you refuse the cup of life because God has not infused all His bitters into it?

Hearken to me, you that are so readily cast down, some of these depths you never need wish to know, for they would not be to your advantage, but to your loss. The dark side of much that is called Christian experience is not the work of the Holy Spirit at all. In many, it is occasioned by a natural crabbedness disposition, some are so hard that God must use iron wedges with them before their hearts will be reached. There are men with such proud spirit, that they need to be brought down to feed swine before they will arise and go to their Father. Others are obstinate and wear a brow of brass, and these must be made faint with labor before they will yield.

In many instances, the mental distress which attends the work of the Spirit is produced by sickness of body, it is not repentance, but indigestion or some other evil agency depressing the spirits. A sluggish liver will produce most of those fearsome forebodings which we are so ready to regard as spiritual emotions. There is such a blending of the physical with the mental, that it is hard to name our feelings.

All the experience of a Christian man is not Christian experience. The troubled man experiences a good deal, not because he is a Christian, but because he is a man, a sickly man, a man inclined to melancholy. Why will you envy such a person? Do you want to feel his despondency? Do you really desire disease? Do you think you could trust God better if you had a morbid mind and a disordered body? What nonsense! I do not admire your taste, I think you are very foolish.

In multitudes of instances the strange depressions which befall some excellent people are the result of external trouble, of grinding poverty, of frequent bereavements, or of excessive labor. These things may greatly intensify the bitterness of spiritual distress. Do you desire affliction? Do you really think that poverty or bankruptcy would help you to believe in God? Give some men a holiday by the sea, and their dark thoughts vanish. Were they ever desirable?

In desiring what would only grieve you, you remind me of a child that would always cry until its mother said, “What! Do you cry for nothing? You shall have something to cry for before long.” If you covet grief, and even dare to threaten the Lord that you will not believe Him unless He vexes you, it may be that He will deal with you according to your desires, and then you will cry in earnest on the other side of your mouth.

Frequently the great darkness through which many true people of God pass is occasioned by Satan. He delights to torment the child of God with blasphemous suggestions, or with foul imaginations. Do any of you say, because you are a stranger to this, “We cannot believe”? Why, dear soul, you must be out of your mind to talk so. Bless God with all your heart that you are a stranger to this horrible temptation. Never be so insane as to wish for this dreadful trial. These temptations may come quite soon enough. Desire them? Never, while reason remains to you!

Do you not think, too, that many are more deeply convinced of sin, and more seriously tried, and more fiercely tempted than others, because the Lord has a special design to answer in them? Even when the terrible searching work within is all real, you need not wish for it, for it may not be needful in your case, since God has not the same intention towards you that He has towards the much-tempted one.

Much more is wanted by way of foundation for a lofty tower than for a humble cottage, and so the grand public life of such a man may need more digging out by inward sorrow than your more private life can possibly require. Our Lord may also be shaping the tried soul for special work. If a man is to be a son of consolation to others, he must be much exercised himself. Barnabas must have tasted the wormwood and the gall, or he cannot mix the cup of consolation for others.

Remember that all Christians are not, and cannot be, of the same caliber. We are all soldiers, brethren, but we are not all champions. God calls upon everyone that believes in Christ to fight His battles, but many of us are happy to belong to the rank and file. We cannot all be captains. Only here and there shall we find a David, who, with his sling and his stone shall go forth, a solitary champion, against gigantic Philistines. For David it was needful that he should fight lions and bears in his youth, or he would not have faced the giant. If God gives us less of inward and outward trials than others, He knows best.

We need enough sorrow to drive us from self and carnal confidence, and when that is effected, it would be folly to sigh for more. Our wisdom is to leave our experience with the Lord, who will appoint us sun or shade, as best will suit our growth. Let us envy no man his standing upon Tabor, or Pisgah, and on the other hand, let us never desire to make excursions with the Lord's Jonahs, and go with them to the bottom of the mountains. Seek not to copy another man's ups or downs, but wait on God, and put your trust in Him, even though you should seem to yourself to be more foolish than any other living man.

II. Secondly, and very briefly, A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US FROM LEARNING.

Suppose you have to say, "I am more brutish than any man," you have so much the more need of being taught the things of God. If you have not the understanding of a man, there is so much more cause that you should go to school to the Holy Spirit, till the eyes of your understanding shall be enlightened, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Vital truth is simple. A great many things are hard to understand, but that which is essential to salvation is not difficult. To know yourself a sinner, and Christ a Savior, is this a deep mystery? To quit your own self, and your own trusts, simply to rely upon the person and work of the Son of God, is this exceedingly difficult to understand? The safest truth is the simplest. Commonly an invention in machinery grows more simple as it nears perfection, and because God's way of salvation is perfect, therefore it is simplicity itself. You can know the Gospel, for it is not a tough metaphysical problem, but a revelation which he that runs may read.

If you are staggered by the sublimity of heavenly learning, consider that these things are revealed to babes. Our Lord said, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Therefore, if you are more than ever conscious of your spiritual babyhood, be none the less assured that the Lord can and will reveal His truths to you.

Remember, also, that the Holy Ghost is a great Teacher. The best earthly teacher may be able to do very little with such slow scholars as we are, therefore let us go to our heavenly Teacher, that He may give us of His Spirit wherewith we may learn the truth. He can teach young men wisdom, and give to babes knowledge and discretion. When the Lord teaches, it is wonderful how quickly we learn. We have frequently met with young children, deep-taught in the things of God, because the Holy Ghost has been their Teacher.

Let me comfort you by the remark that a sense of ignorance is a very good beginning for a learner. The doorstep of the Palace of Wisdom is a humble sense of ignorance. When you are empty of all

fancied wisdom, there is room for God to fill you with heavenly instruction. If you are more brutish than any man, I should hope you are more surely on the way to be made wise from the very foundation, by the teaching of the Spirit of God.

Hang your hope upon that promise, “All thy children shall be taught of the LORD.” You are one of those children, though you are a little one, and therefore you are included in the number of those who shall be taught of the Lord. The Lord will not give up one of the children of Zion as incorrigible. Dunces, whom no other master would tolerate, the gentle Spirit will tenderly instruct. Therefore I say unto you, let not a sense of inferiority keep you from following on to know the Lord.

III. I have been very brief upon that second point, and I must be much the same on the third, A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT KEEP US BACK FROM SERVING GOD.

What if, like Agur, we take the very lowest place, yet, like him, let us speak on God’s behalf. Who knows, He may prophesy by us also? Agur’s simple word is called “the prophecy.” If God shall speak by you, my friend, your thinking so little of yourself will give a charm to your speech. If God shall use such as you are, He will have all the glory of it, will He not?

When the Lord uses a very clever man, there is always the fear that people will ascribe the success to the human instrument. But when the Lord uses the man who owns himself to be a poor, foolish creature, then the honor is not divided, but all men see that this is the finger of God. The Lord loves to use tools which are not rusted with self-conceit. An axe which boasts itself shall not be used upon the thick trees.

God can use inferior persons for grand purposes. He has often done so. Go into His armory, and see how He has worked by flies and lice, by worms and caterpillars, by frogs and serpents. His greatest victories were won by a hammer and a tent-pin, by an ox-goad, by the jawbone of an ass, by a sling and a stone and such like. His greatest prophets at the first tried to excuse themselves on the ground of unfitness. In the armory of the Lord you will find few swords with golden scabbards, but you will find many unlikely weapons. God uses what no one else would look upon. The Lord can get much glory out of you, my poor desponding friend, wherefore, bestir yourself. Though you think yourself quite unworthy, go on in consecration of heart to yield yourself wholly to God, and He will not pass you by.

Think you yet again, the Lord does not expect of you more than you can do, it is accepted if it be according to what a man has, and not according to what he has not. In building a house there must be the common bricks for the wall as well as the carved stone for the corner. Are you so ambitious that nothing but the chief place will suit you? Fie upon you! Let no man despise anything that may come in to complete the building of the house that God inhabits.

Suppose you feel that you are more brutish than any man, shall I give you a little advice? If you can do but little, make the best of yourself by intensity. In the natural world, that creature is most to be feared which is the most energetic, rather than that which is greatest. You shall find your life more in danger from the slender viper than from the huge ox. That which is the fullest of fire and energy will achieve the most. A small musket ball in full career will do more execution than a great cannonball which lies still.

Make the best of yourself, also, by perseverance. If you are a little axe, and can give only a small chip at a time, keep on striking, and even the oak will yield to your blows. If you are only a drop, remember that constant dripping wears away stones. Keep on at holy service, and do so all the more because you do so little at any one time. Many littles will make much. Pence given every day will make pounds.

Make up by spiritual force what you lack in natural ability. If you lack talent, get all the more grace, and you will be no loser. If you love God more, even though you know less of science, you will live a successful, because a holy, life. If you have a greater love for the souls of your hearers than the man who has ten talents, you may be ten times more a soul-winner than he. It is spiritual power, not mental power, which avails in conversion.

Agur, a little further on in his one chapter, cheers up the humbler sort of people by his talk about little things. In his twenty-fourth verse, he says—“There be four things which are little upon the earth,

but they are exceeding wise: the ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer.” You that cannot do very much, take care never to lose an opportunity. Make hay while the sun shines, seize the seasons, and turn them to account. If you were a great man, and could at one speech sway the minds of thousands, even then you ought not to be idle, but if you can only deal with one at a time, do not let that one escape you. Copy the bees and the ants, and use the summer hours right diligently.

Next, read verse twenty-six. You are feeble, but remember, “The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks.” Keep to the rock, keep to eternal verities, keep to the things which cannot be moved. Never run away from the Gospel. There is not much in *you*, but there is a great deal in Christ, always keep to Him. You cannot say much, but let all you do say savor of Christ. Never quit the Gospel, or you leave the rock of your shelter. Keep to the rock, and you will do much good, and run no risk.

Next, if you are very little, you should, like the locusts, associate with others, and go forth in an orderly way to work. Make yourself useful by dropping into rank, and in holy companionship doing your part in connection with the rest. One locust is a thing to be laughed at, but when they go forth in bands, they make nations tremble. One believer may accomplish little, but in the ranks of the Sunday school the many can do wonders.

Suppose you are as little thought of as a spider, yet copy the spider in the two things which Agur mentions. Take hold with your hands. Always be taking hold upon the promise of the great King by the hand of faith. Let your faith come out of your own heart, as the spider spins her web out of her own bowels. Be always hanging on to one promise or another, and constantly add to your holding. Have also a holy courage like the spider, who is in king’s palaces. She is not satisfied with being hidden away in a barn or a cottage, she pays a visit to Solomon, and makes her abode in his painted halls.

If you can go anywhere for Christ, go and spin your web of Gospel from your inmost soul. Make up your mind that whatever company you are in, you will begin to spin about Christ, and spin a web, in which to catch a soul for your Lord. In this way, though you fear you are more foolish than any man, God will make as much use of you as if you were the wisest of men. I pray you, O feeble one, render to your Lord such service as you can.

IV. Lastly, A SENSE OF INFERIORITY MUST NOT HINDER OUR JOY IN THE LORD.

Suppose you have to say, this morning, very groaningly, “I am more brutish than any man, I have not the understanding of a man.” What then? Are you going to fret and worry about it? Will you, therefore, refuse to believe in your God? I do not see, if it be true to the fullest extent, that there is any reasonable cause for being cast down in reference to the Lord your God.

Would you expect to be saved because you were *not* brutish? Would you look for heaven because you had a fine understanding, and could place a third of the letters of the alphabet at the end of your name? If everybody said, “What a highly-cultured man this is!” do you think heaven’s gate would open any the more readily to you? You are on the wrong tack, my friend, if you think so. Capacities and attainments put plumes into the hat, but they do not protect the head from error.

Answer me this. Are not the little things in creation full of joy? Do not the dewdrops sparkle on the hedges? When the summer comes, walk down your garden, and see the thousands of gnats. What are they doing? They are dancing up and down in the sunbeams. The very midges are full of delight. Will you be shamed by a gnat or a midge? No! take to dancing too, but let it be like that of David when he danced before the ark of God! Rejoice in the Lord always. God gives small creatures great delight. Why should not you be as happy, after your measure, as the angels are? Little stars twinkle for very brightness.

If you need humbler examples, look at the little birds, and hear how they sing. Great birds seldom have the gift of song. You may listen long before you will hear an ostrich or an emu singing. In our own farmyards neither the turkey nor the peacock charm us with their melody. Little birds awake the sun with their harmonies, and make the morning sacred with their psalmody. Tell me, you that feel as if you were less than the least, is there any reason why you should not rejoice in the Lord?

Who had most joy out of the Lord Jesus when He was here? Or rather, who expressed their delight most exultingly? It was not great Peter, nor active James, nor holy John—it was the children in the temple.

*“Children of Jerusalem
Sang the praise of Jesus’ name.”*

They shouted “Hosanna!” “Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he hath perfected *praise*,” if nothing else. The little ones can praise, for they are happy in the sweet simplicity of their faith, and in the warmth of their hearts. My dear friend, do the same. Delight yourself also in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord, and express your gladness.

“Ah, sir! I am foolish and ignorant.” Yes, but did you notice in the seventy-third Psalm, which we read just now, that I called your attention to the singular language used by Asaph? He says, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast held me by my right hand.” God takes care of the foolish, and guards the feeble folk, wherefore, let them rest in His love, and be glad in His care.

Remember, that if, by reason of our inferiority, you and I have to take a back seat, the back seats are still in the house. Our littleness does not alter God’s promise. It is the same promise to the small as to the great, to the weak as to the strong. Our deficiency does not alter our God. He is as full of grace and truth as ever. He does not increase because we are enlarged, neither is He diminished because we have declined. My God, as a babe in grace, is the same God as those rejoice in who have attained to fullness of stature in Christ Jesus.

What a blessed God we have! Only to think of Him is hope, to know Him is fruition. “Yea, mine own God is he,” said David, and he could never have uttered a grander word. “This God is our God for ever and ever,” is a sentence which might as fairly have been spoken in heaven as upon this lower earth. It has a glory tone about it. Come, you little ones, you backward ones, you foolish ones, dwell upon the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, with your hearts’ delight. The triune God is yours, your Father, your Redeemer, your Comforter, a triple blessing is thus secured to you, let your triple nature of body, soul, and spirit rejoice therein.

This makes no difference to the covenant of grace. Babes in their long-clothes, if they are heirs, have quite as sure a right to their inheritance as have those who are of full age. One is as legally protected as one-and-twenty. The children cannot yet take full possession by reason of their tender years, but the law defies a rogue to rob even an infant heir of his lawful patrimony. Enjoy you, therefore, O you little ones, the infinite wealth of the covenant, and doubt not your right and title in Christ Jesus!

However little you may be, this makes no difference to God’s love to you. Ask yourselves, do you love that full-grown son of yours of twenty-five so much that you have the less love left for your chubby little boy at home of two or three? Bless his little heart! when he climbs your knee today, and asks whether you have a kiss for him, will you answer, “No, Johnny, I cannot love you, for you are so little that I gave all my love to your older brother, because he knows so much more than you do, and can be so useful to me”?

Oh, no, you love the last one, perhaps, better than any of them, certainly not less. They say that if there be a child in the family who is a little weak, the mother always loves it most. It is so with our God, He is most tender and most gracious to the weakest and least known. Our Shepherd carries the lambs in His bosom, and does gently lead those that are with young, wherefore, be not cast down because of your conscious inferiority, but admire the condescending grace of God.

If you feel that you are more brutish than anybody else, yet believe in God up to the hilt, believe in Him and trust Him with all your heart, and then feel all the more gratitude that He should have loved such a worthless one as you are. Feel all the more content with that free, rich, sovereign grace which has chosen you and ordained you to eternal life. Glorify God by your very weakness. Glory in your infirmity, because the power of Christ does rest upon you. Be all the more trustful in God since you have

nothing in yourself to rely upon. Say, “The great ones may run alone, but I am a babe, and I must be carried in my Father’s arms, therefore I will have the greater faith to match my greater need.”

Our deep sense of folly and weakness should also keep us humble before the Lord. Where is room for boasting? What have we to glory in? We owe all to mercy, and to mercy shall be all the praise!

Lastly, be more tender to others who, like yourself, are feeble. It is wonderful how gracious little ones care for other little ones, sympathize with them, pray for them, and comfort them. I believe that the saying is strictly true, that “the poor help the poor,” and I know it is so among the spiritually poor. High and mighty ones cannot help downcast saints, only those who have been afflicted can console the afflicted.

In the East, among the Bedouins, in a shepherd’s family, the little children, as soon as they can walk, learn to keep the lambs. You see, the little boy who can only go slowly can lead the little lambs admirably, for he and they go well together. The big father would have taken long strides, and so have tired the little lambs, but his little son can only go at a slow pace, and that pace suits the lambs. The weak lambs are pleased with their little shepherd, who is a lamb like themselves, he is fond of the lambs, and the lambs feel at home with him.

So, dear friends, if the Lord permits you to be among the little ones, look after the little ones, and whereas some would have to bend their backs too much to look after the lowly, you are on their level, and will naturally care for their state. Thus will you find your sphere of usefulness, and in it you will earn to yourselves a good degree. Though, like Agur, you feel more brutish than any man, you will so live that nobody would have thought so if you had not told them, and few will believe it when you do tell them. To God alone be glory. Amen.

PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 73, Proverbs 30:1-9

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—122 (SONG 1), 398, 616

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